

# ABUSE

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## **Abuse**

No one deserves to be abused, threatened or made to feel unsafe, especially in their own home. Unfortunately, domestic violence is a huge social problem in the United States today. Domestic abuse is a violent crime involving members of an intimate or familial relationship. People don't have to be married to be involved in the crime of domestic violence. Victims can be anyone involved in an intimate relationship or living with an abusive partner. The term "partner abuse" includes both heterosexual and homosexual couples, engaged, married, estranged or divorced couples, and single people living together or dating.

## **Men's Violence**

Although violent acts can be committed by anyone, the overwhelming majority (90%) of violent crimes are committed by men. Statistics show that many more men than women commit violent crimes against both women and men.

According to the Salt Lake City Victim Advocate Program, the ratio of domestic abuse victims is about 90% female to 10% male. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 95% of all domestic assaults are committed by men on their female partners. Since women constitute the vast majority of victims, this section will mainly address men abusing women.

Six million American men batter their wives or girlfriends; 4,000 of these men will kill his wife or girlfriend. The FBI estimates a man beats a woman every 18 seconds. Domestic violence claims more lives than mugging, rapes, and automobile accidents combined. Men are more likely to victimize intimate female friends between 19-29 years old than women of other ages. Men of all cultures, races, occupations, and income levels batter women.

## **Child Abuse**

It is important to remember that children are also victims of domestic abuse. According to the Utah Domestic Violence Advisory Council, each year 144,075 children witness domestic abuse. In most cases children witness their father abusing their mother. In 50% of these cases the children are physically assaulted; in 100% of the cases the children are

mentally/emotionally abused. Children who have seen abuse or have been abused themselves are 1,000 times more likely to be part of an abusive relationship, as the perpetrator or victim, than children raised in non-violent homes.

**Pet Abuse**

In addition to children, animals are the forgotten victims of domestic violence. One study, conducted by Dr. Frank Ascione at Utah State University, found that in homes with domestic violence, men are 15 times more likely to harm or kill pets. Surveying women in a Utah shelter, the study found nearly 1 in 4 delayed entering the shelter out of concern for pets. Nearly as many women cited coercion as their partner's primary motive for threatening or harming a pet. Often, battering men threaten or injure pets to keep a partner from leaving or reporting the abuse.

**Common Characteristics of Women battered by Men**

While it is impossible to categorize every person in an abusive relationship, these are common demographics of battered women. Domestic abuse includes emotional, mental, and sexual abuse.

- Low self-esteem
- Tends to be a traditionalist in the home, may strongly believe in family unity and prescribed gender roles
- Accepts responsibility for battering man's actions
- Suffers from guilt, but denies terror and anger
- Suffers severe stress reactions with psycho-physiological complaints
- Uses sex to establish intimacy
- Believes no one will be able to help her resolve her situation

**Common Characteristics of a Battering Man**

Common demographics of men who batter. Abusers are found in every socio-economic group.

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- Low self-esteem
- Traditionalist in the home, believing in male supremacy and stereotyped masculine sex role in the family
- Blames others for his actions
- Pathologically jealous
- Presents dual personality
- Has severe stress reactions for which he uses drinking and battering to cope
- Uses sex as an act of aggression to enhance his self-esteem
- Does not believe his violent behavior has negative consequences

### **Battering Men's Progression of Violence**

- Pre-battering violence
  - Verbal abuse, hitting objects, throwing objects, breaking objects, and making threats. When men engage in these behaviors, almost 100% resort to battering.
- Beginning Levels
  - Pushing, grabbing, restraining
- Moderate Levels
  - Slapping, punching, kicking, pulling out clumps of hair
- Severe Levels
  - Choking, beating with objects (sticks, ball bats, bed slats, etc.), use of weapons, rape. (One in three men will rape a woman in a battering relationship.)

### **Why Women Become Trapped in the Cycle of Abuse**

There are many reasons a woman may stay with an abusive man. The reasons are complicated and specific to the individual; however, there are some recognized syndromes that are used to justify an abusive relationship.

- Honeymoon Syndrome
  - Also known as "Hearts and Flowers." The battering man will produce gifts and promises, any bribe that will get the woman return to him.
- Super Dad Syndrome
  - He tells her that he will be a great dad if she returns.
- Sobriety Syndrome
  - She believes, "If he can stop drinking he will stop beating me." Drinking does not cause beating. If it did, he would beat strangers on the street.
- Revival Syndrome
  - He starts going to church, so she believes the beating will stop.
- Counseling Syndrome
  - He tells her he'll seek counseling if she comes back. Since less than 1% of battering men voluntarily enter counseling, this may be his attempt to regain control of the woman.

### **How can I tell if someone is being abused?**

Men typically isolate the women they abuse. Men may control their partner's lives to a great extent through physical and emotional abuse. Besides obvious physical signs of battering, such as recurring bruises, black eyes, scratches and scrapes, the following are warning signs to look for:

- She mentions being unable to use the telephone.

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- She is forbidden from seeing friends without him present.
- He has exclusive control over all money and financial matters.
- She is excluded from decision-making at home.
- He won't let her learn to drive, go to school, or get a job.
- Her freedom is restricted as a small child's would be.
- She displays poor self-esteem, poor self-concept. She speaks poorly of herself. She won't make eye contact when talking.
- She may complain of non-specific aches and pains that are constant and recurring. These are stress-related problems.

### **How do I help someone who is being abused?**

Women who confide to others that men are abusing them, often do so with embarrassment. They may view an abusive situation as a personal failure on their part. This view is often compounded by the abusers themselves, who tend to blame victims for "provoking" them. Also, women in abusive relationships can suffer from battered women's syndrome, which involves a belief that there is nothing they can do to get out of the situation. (This syndrome is particularly common to women who grew up seeing their fathers abuse their mothers). Because of these factors, it's important that you don't compound whatever feelings of shame victims of abuse may harbor.

- Here are some don'ts
  - Don't appear judgmental; never imply that the victim provokes violence with questions like "What did you do to make him angry?"
  - Don't focus on the abuser; it's tempting to focus on his behavior, but remember that you're also criticizing her choice of a partner, and she may feel loyalty towards him.
  - Don't assume empathy; sympathy is fine, but if you say things like "If it were me, I would never stand for that" or "I would have left him," you

may degrade the victim.

- Don't pressure her to stay in the relationship; don't reinforce the message that violence is acceptable.
- Don't condemn her for not leaving; up to 3/4 of domestic assaults reported to law enforcement agencies are inflicted after a couple has separated, and a man is most likely to murder a woman when she is attempting to report abuse or leave an abusive situation.
- Don't avoid the issue by saying nothing at all to her; silence is condoning.
- Here are some do's
  - Do be supportive. Remind her of her worth, and of her right and the right of her children to be protected from abuse.
  - Do praise her for having the courage to talk about abuse.
  - Do listen to learn whether she's ready to leave the relationship or pursue some other course of action.
  - Do offer to provide her a list of help sources (you can click on Resources for a list)
  - Do follow up by asking her how she is doing.

**A checklist for women in a battering relationship**

Because leaving may be dangerous, many women stay with abusive men. But cohabiting with battering men is also highly dangerous, since violence most often increases in frequency and severity over time. Although leaving may pose initial hazards, research data demonstrates that ultimately a woman can best achieve safety and freedom apart from the batterer.

If you are involved with an abusive man but feel you are not ready to leave, here are some things you can do. (These suggestions also apply if children are involved.)



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- Set aside some money so you has cash available if you need to leave quickly.
- Keep enough money on your person to pay for transportation to safety.
- Pack a suitcase and store it with a friend, relative, or in a public locker. Include a change of clothing for yourself and your children, toiletries and an extra set of keys to your car/house.
- Keep important items such as medication, marriage and birth certificates, etc. in a safe place so you can take them quickly.
- Have a plan of where you will go if you leave and how to contact a family member/friend who can help you.
- Get information from a local temporary women's shelter
- Call your doctor or go to the emergency room if you are injured.
- Call law enforcement (911). Physical abuse is a crime, so you can protect your safety by involving the legal system.
- Finally, if you are hesitant to leave your home because you fear for the safety of your pet(s), Salt Lake County Animal Services (801-264-2243) or (801-799-3473) now sponsors a Safe Pets/Safe People Program that involves temporarily sheltering pets of women being battered by men until they can find safe housing elsewhere.

### Great Links

For more information on domestic abuse come by the Health and Wellness Services office for information and brochures!